

Inside U.S. Embassy Tirana

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Remarks of President Barack Obama Ramadan Message Washington, DC

On behalf of the American people – including Muslim communities in all fifty states – I want to extend best wishes to Muslims in America and around the world. Ramadan Kareem.

Ramadan is the month in which Muslims believe the Koran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, beginning with a simple word – iqra. It is therefore a time when Muslims reflect upon the wisdom and guidance that comes with faith, and the responsibility that human beings have to one another, and to God. Like many

people of different faiths who have known Ramadan through our communities and families, I know this to be a festive time – a time when families gather, friends host iftars, and meals are shared. But I also know that Ramadan is a time of intense devotion and reflection – a time when Muslims fast during the day and perform tarawih prayers at night, reciting and listening to the entire Koran over the course of the month.



Adventures in Albania's Far North

On August 24, anthropologist Antonia Young discussed her work with the Balkan Peace Park, an entity straddling the borders of Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Macedonia, that focuses on economic development opportunities, English teaching, and archeological research. Dr. Young's work with the park for more than 10 years has enabled her to collect

many stories about the unique culture and traditions among Albanians in the remote mountainous area, including gender roles, community organization, and the "sworn virgins": women who become men. This is Dr. Young's second time at the embassy to present her work with the Balkan Peace Park, which Public Affairs has sponsored for the past few years.



Embassy Welcomes New Community Members

On August 14, the Management Office organized a “Meet and Greet” reception in the rose garden to welcome recently arrived members of the embassy community. Ambassador Withers also took the opportunity to announce the new “Lani Adami” award for local employees. The award is named for an Albanian embassy employee in the 1920s who was arrested because of that employment and tortured. He later died from his injuries. The award will be given to an employee who exemplifies those qualities synonymous with Mr. Adami’s service, namely integrity, dedication, and courage in the face of difficult circumstances.



DCM Gives Send-Off to YES Program Exchange Students

On August 13, Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Deborah Jones and Acting Public Affairs Officer Leigh Rieder welcomed Albania’s first participants in the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program to the embassy for a friendly pre-departure chat. The informal discussion touched on U.S. cultural diversity and the opportunity the students will have to educate Americans about Albania. The YES Program sends high school students from countries with significant Muslim populations to the U.S. for one academic year to attend high school and live with a local family.



Embassy Bids Farewell to English Language Fellow

Supported by Public Affairs, English Language Fellow Celeste Coleman worked at Aleksandër Xhuvani University in Elbasan during the past year to improve English language instruction there and in the surrounding community. She collaborated with university faculty to create or redesign several course curricula and taught the university’s fourth year English students, who were preparing to become teachers in local schools. Celeste taught methodology and professional development courses to this group, and also supervised them through the processes of their teaching practicum and diploma thesis. In addition, she taught an academic writing class to the university’s first year students, and presented at several international conferences. We appreciate Celeste’s accomplishments in Albania and wish her well in her future endeavors.



Albania Represented at Ben Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Alumni Conference

Anri Kodhelaj, Patricia Myslymi, Denisa Qori, and Era Tushaj returned happy and full of ideas for community service after attending the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Alumni Conference held at the American University in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria. The program brings high school-aged youth

together for leadership development in a cross-cultural context. The alumni conference featured opportunities for participants to grapple with Roma (and other minority) rights, the role of religion in democratic societies, and other cutting-edge issues.



USAID's Roberta Mahoney: "Albanians, Raise Your Voice"

On August 4, weekly magazine Klan printed an interview with USAID Country Director Roberta Mahoney, on Albania's economy, corruption and tourism. Mahoney highlighted the steps that Albania has taken in its fight against corruption, though she emphasized there's still work to do. She called

on citizens to raise their voice, to not tolerate corruption, but to denounce it. Mahoney commented on USAID's economic development programs in Albania, and said that now the focus is on promoting Albania's tourism and culture abroad. "Albania is a beautiful country, with a wonderful shoreline and great hospitality," she said.



U.S. and Albania Hold Joint Counter-Narcotics Training

The U.S. Navy, in conjunction with the Albanian Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Finance conducted over two weeks of counter-narcotics training near Vlorë, Albania, July 13-30. US Navy Seals trained Albanian Naval Forces in the proper techniques for intercepting, boarding, search and seizure.

This was the first exercise that involved the command and control of the maritime agencies in Albania from the Intra-agency Maritime Operations Center (IMOC). In the photo, an Albanian patrol boat intercepts a suspected narcotics mother ship, as a second patrol boat provides security during the training exercise.

